

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO PROTECT SENSITIVE INFORMATION?

1. We see, and handle, a lot of documents and information in our daily duties, including letters, memos, drafts, e-mail, pictures, maps, graphs, computer print-outs, finance and accounting records, and time and attendance reports. Some of this information if released, could impede government operations and invade individual rights to personal privacy. When sensitive material is not classified as **"TOP SECRET," "SECRET,"** or **"CONFIDENTIAL,"** it is often labeled "For Official Use Only" or "FOUO."
2. Information that is categorized and marked as FOUO is exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Though the FOIA gives the public access to government records, it also protects nine types of information from public disclosure. If you see FOUO information, it should already be appropriately labeled. Unfortunately, though, not all FOUO material is properly marked.
3. There are five types of information that you will most often handle that need protection. These are:
 - a. Documents containing personal information, such as home addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, photographs, pay allotments, age and other personal data. In addition to protection under the FOIA, much of the information is protected under the Privacy Act. The unauthorized collection or release of such information may result in civil and criminal sanctions against responsible persons. Unofficial records containing such information must be destroyed.
 - b. Internal documents which are part of the decision making process, and may contain subjective evaluations, opinions, and recommendations.
 - c. Documents that contain trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a company on a privileged or confidential basis. Release of this type of information would impede the government's ability to get additional information.
 - d. Information that if released would allow circumvention of an agency rule, policy, or statute, thereby impedes the agency in the conduct of its mission. A simple example of this would be protecting upcoming test questions and answers. Release of this type of information would compromise the purpose of the test.
 - e. Investigative or law enforcement information. Some of this is also protected under the Privacy Act.
4. The steps to take when handling FOUO materials are simple. FOUO material should be labeled as it is created. Unclassified documents containing FOUO material must be marked "For Official Use Only" at the bottom of the outside of the front cover (if any), on each page containing FOUO information, and on the outside of the back cover (if any).
5. Other records such as photographs, films, cassettes, disks and diskettes must be clearly marked as "For Official Use Only" or FOUO. Both the information and the product that houses it must be marked. DA Label 87 (For Official Use Only) cover sheet may be used for these purposes.
6. Each part of the electronically transmitted messages containing FOUO information must be marked accordingly. Place the abbreviation "FOUO" before the beginning of the text. DA Label 87 cover sheets maybe used when FOUO is in use or transited.
7. FOUO material should be kept only in areas not accessible to non-government personnel. Non record copies of FOUO material must be protected in the same manner as official copies.
8. Whenever possible, it is recommended that FOUO material be destroyed by mixing it with classified material which is ready for destruction in a authorized, validated shredder. If this is not possible, FOUO material should be torn up in such a manner that it can not be reconstructed. There are sufficient shredders that allow all documents to be properly destroyed.
9. For further information or inquiries regarding the safeguard of documents, please contact the USAG Benelux ASG Security Office, Information Security Specialist, located in Rm 143, Bldg. 30, Daumerie Caserne, DSN: 361-5233.